

My Lady of the North

THE LOVE STORY OF
A GRAY JACKET

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"WHEN WILDERNESS WAS KING"

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I left, remembering then my own need. By using the back stairway I avoided unpleasant contact with the traces of conflict yet visible at the front of the house, and finally discovered a bathroom which afforded facilities for cleansing my flesh wounds and making my general appearance more presentable. I found I could do little to improve the condition of my clothing, but after making such



A Gentle Hand Was Stroking Back the Hair From Off My Temples.

changes for the better as were possible, soaking the clotted blood from out my hair, and washing the powder stains from my face, I felt I should no longer prove an object of aversion even to the critical eyes of the women, who would fully realize the cause for my torn and begrimed uniform.

A glance from the window told me the Federal cavalrymen were bearing out the dead and depositing them beyond view of the house in the deserted negro cabins. Ebers and one or two of my own men were standing near, carefully scanning the uncovered faces as they were borne past, while scraps of conversation overheard brought the information that the long dining room where I had passed the night on guard had been converted into a temporary hospital.

Irresolute as to my next action, I passed out into the upper hall. It was deserted and strangely silent, seemingly far removed from all those terrible scenes so lately enacted in the rooms beneath. My head by this time throbbled with pain; I desired to be alone, to think, to map out my future course before proceeding down the stairs to meet the others. With this in view I sank down in complete weariness upon a convenient settee. My heavy head sank back upon the arm of the settee, and deep sleep closed my eyes. It was in my dreams I felt it first—a light, moist touch upon my burning forehead—and I imagined I was a child once more, back at the old home, caressed by the soft hand of my mother. But as consciousness slowly returned I began to realize dimly where I was, and that I was no longer alone. A gentle hand was stroking back the hair from off my temples, while the barest uplift of my eyelids revealed the folds of a dark blue skirt pressing close to my side. Instantly I realized who must be the wearer, and remained motionless until I could better control my first unwise impulse.

She spoke no word, and I cautiously opened my eyes and glanced up into her face. For a time she remained unaware of my awakening, and sat there silently stroking my forehead, her gaze fixed mutely upon the window at the farther end of the hall. Doubtless she had been sitting thus for some time, and had become absorbed in her own reflections, for I saw there drinking in her beauty for several moments before she chanced to glance downward and observe that I was awake. I think the very intensity of my gaze awakened her from reverie, for she turned almost with a start and looked down upon me. As our eyes met, a warm wave of color dyed her throat and cheeks crimson. "Why," she exclaimed in momentary confusion, "I supposed I should know before you awoke, and have ample time to escape unobserved. I discovered you lying here. You were resting very uncomfortably when I first came, and I felt it my duty to render your position as easy as possible. I did not forget that your fatigue came in our defense."

"Could you not say in yours?" I corrected. "But I have already been more than repaid. Your hand upon my brow was far more restful than I can tell you—its soft stroking mingled in my dreams even before I awoke. It brought back to me the thought of my mother. I do not think I have had a woman's hand press back my hair since I was a child."

"She is in Richmond, stopping with friends, but since my capture we have lost all trace of each other. I was reported as having been killed in action, and I doubt if she even yet knows the truth. Everything is so confused in the capital that it is impossible to trace any one not directly connected with the army, once you lose exact knowledge of their whereabouts."

"Your father, then, is dead?" "He yielded his life the first year of the war; and our plantation near Charlottesville has been constantly in the track of the armies. One rather important battle, indeed, was fought upon it, so you may realize that it is now desolate and utterly unfit for habitation."

"The house yet stands?" "The chimney and one wall alone remained when I was last there," I replied, glad of the interest she exhibited. "Fortunately two of the negro cabins were yet standing. Doubtless these will form the nucleus of our home when the war ceases; they will prove a trifle better than the mere sky."

"The south is certainly paying a terrible price for rebellion," she said soberly, her fine eyes filled with tears. "I am sure I have tarried here quite as long as I should, now that I can be of no further service."

As she gathered her skirts in her hand preparatory to descending the stairs, I yielded to temptation and stopped her. Right or wrong I must yet have one word more.

"I beg of you do not desert me so soon. This may prove our final meeting—indeed, I fear it must be; surely, then, it need not be so brief a one."

"Our final meeting?" She echoed my words as though scarcely comprehending their meaning.

"Yes," I said, rising and standing before her. "How can we hope it shall be otherwise? I am not free to remain here, even were it best for other reasons, for I am a soldier under orders. You undoubtedly will proceed north at the earliest possible moment. There is scarcely a probability that in the great wide world we shall meet again."

"The war will soon be over; perhaps then you may come north also." "I scarcely expect to do so. My work then will be to join with my comrades in an effort to rebuild the shattered fortunes of Virginia. When the lines of lives diverge so widely as ours must, the chances are indeed few that they ever meet again."

"But surely you can remain here until we leave?" she questioned, evidently striving not to reveal the depth of interest she felt in the decision. "It will not be until tomorrow that all details are arranged so as to permit of our departure. I had supposed you would certainly be with us until then."

"Mrs. Brennan!" I exclaimed almost passionately, "do not tempt me! Your wish is a temptation most difficult to resist."

"Why resist, then?" "She did not look at me, but stood twisting a handkerchief nervously through her fingers. The abrupt question startled me almost into full confession, but fortunately my eyes chanced to fall upon her wedding-ring, and instantly I crushed the mad words back into my throat."

"Because it is right," I replied slowly, feeling each sentence as a death-blow. "For me to remain can mean only one thing. For that I am ready enough, if I thought you desired it, but I dare not choose such a course myself."

"You speak in riddles. What is the one thing?"

"A personal meeting with Major Brennan."

The high color deserted her cheeks, and her eyes met mine in sudden inquiry. "Oh, no, no!" she exclaimed with energy. "You and Frank must never meet in that way. You mean a duel?"

I bowed gravely. "I was permitted to aid in defense of this house only by pledging myself to Major Brennan afterwards."

"But why need it be—at least now that you have stood together as comrades?"

"I fear," I said quietly, "that fact will not count for much. We both fought inspired by your presence."

"Mine!" I hardly knew how to interpret her tone.

"Certainly, you cannot be ignorant that Major Brennan's dislike is based upon your friendship for me."

"But there is no reason," she stammered. "He has no cause—"

"His reason I must leave him to explain," I interrupted, to relieve her evident embarrassment. "His words, however, were extremely explicit; and to ignore them by departure is to imperil my own reputation in both armies. I would do so for no one else in the world but you."

"How can I ever thank you?" she asked gravely. "Captain Wayne, you make me trust you utterly, and place me constantly in your debt."

"Then you realize that I am right?"

"Yes," slowly, but making no effort to release her hands. "Yet is no other escape possible?"

"None within my knowledge."

"And you must go?"

"I must go—unless you bid me stay."

"Oh, I cannot; I cannot at such a cost!" she cried, and I could feel her body tremble with the intensity of her emotion. "But, Captain Wayne, our friendship surely need not be severed now for ever? I cannot bear to think that it should be. I am no cold, heartless ingrate, and shall never forget what you have done to serve me. I value every sacrifice you have made on my behalf. Let us indeed part now if, as you say, it must be so; yet surely there are happier days in store for both of us—days when the men of this nation will not wear different uniforms and deem it manly to fight and kill each other."

"The great struggle will certainly cease, possibly within a very few weeks," I answered, greatly moved by her earnestness, "but I fear the men engaged in it will remain much the same in their natures however they may dress. I can only say this: Were the path clear, I would surely find you, no matter where you were hidden."

"How terrible it is that a woman must ever choose between such evils," she said almost bitterly. "The heart says one thing and duty another all through life, it seems to me. I have so much of suffering in these last few months, so much of heartless cruelty, that I cannot bear to be the cause of any more. You and Major Brennan must not meet; but, Captain Wayne, I will not believe that we are to part thus forever."

"Do you mean that I am to seek you when the war closes?"

"There will be no time when I shall not most gladly welcome you."

"Your home?" I asked, wondering still if she could mean all that her words implied. "I have never known where you resided in the north."

"Stonington, Conn." She smiled at me through the tears yet clinging to her long lashes. "You may never come, of course; yet I shall always feel now that perhaps you will; and that is not like a final goodbye, is it?"

I bowed above the hands I held, and pressed my lips upon them. For the moment I durst not speak, and then—a voice suddenly sounded in the hall below:

"I am greatly obliged to you, Miss Minor; she is probably lying down. I will run up and call her."

We started as if rudely awakened from a dream, while a sudden expression of fright swept across her face. "Oh, do not meet him," she begged piteously. "For my sake do not remain here."

"I will go down the back stairway," I returned hastily, "but do you indeed mean it? May I come to you?"

"Yes, yes; but pray go now!"

Unable longer to restrain myself, I clasped her to me, held her for one brief instant strained to my breast, kissed her twice upon lips which had no opportunity for refusal.

"This world is not so wide but that somewhere in it I shall again find the one woman of my heart," I whispered passionately, and was gone.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A Plan Miscarried.

I remembered as I hurried down the back stairway how flushed face, but could recall no look of indignant pride in those clear eyes whose pleasant memory haunted me. She loved me; of this I now felt doubly assured, and the knowledge made my heart light, even while I dreaded the consequences to us both.

I stepped out into the kitchen and came to a sudden pause, facing a table laden with such a variety and abundance of food as had been strange to me for many a long day. Directly opposite, a napkin tucked beneath his double chin, his plate piled high with good things, sat Ebers, while at either end I beheld Mr. and Mrs. Bungay similarly situated. The astonishment of our meeting seemed mutual. The Sergeant, apparently feeling the necessity of explanation, wiped his mouth soberly.

"I vos yooost goin' to fill me op mit der dings like a good soldier, Captain," he said in anxiety.

"No doubt; well, I am rather hungry myself. Mrs. Bungay, in memory of old times cannot you spare me a plate? If so, I will take pleasure in joining your happy company. Thank you. I see you have found your man."

"I have thet, sir," she answered, grimly, "an' I reckon as how he's likely ter stay et hum arter this."

"But you forget he is my guide," I protested, not disinclined to test her temper. "Surely, Mrs. Bungay, you would not deprive the South of his valuable services?"

"An' wouldn't I, now? An' didn't thet little whifft promise me long afore he ever didd you uns? Ain't he my nat'ral protector? Whut's a lone female a goin' ter dew yere in ther mountings w'out no man?"

"Come, Jed, what do you say? Are you tired fighting the battles of the Confederacy, and prefer those of home?"

"I like ter read all 'bout fightin' well 'nough, but dern it, Cap, it kinder hurts whin they hits ye on ther head with a gun." His face lit up suddenly. "Sides, I sorter wanter hev Mariar git 'quainted with thet thar muel o' mine, Beelzebub. He's out thar now, hitched ter a tree, an' a eatin' fit ter bust his biler—never a dern mark on his hide for all be wint through."

"Well, I suppose I shall be compelled to let you and Beelzebub go, but it will prove a serious loss to the cause of the South," I said, my thoughts instantly turned by mention of the mule

to matters of more importance. "I expect there will be lively times up your way."

"Ye kin jist bet thar will," enthusiastically. "It'll be nip and tuck, I reckon, but I'm mighty hopeful o' Mariar. Thet dern muel he needs ter be took down a peg."

"Sergeant," I said, "did you send out a party to bring in our horses and the sabers?"

"It vos all done already; der horses vos found und der sabers."

"How many men have we lost?"

"Der vos five kilt, Captain; dot vos it. I vos hit mit der ear off: Bands is goin' to die, und maybe Elliott vill not get some better; some odders vos hurted."

"How many men does that leave us fit for duty?" I asked decisively, pushing back my plate and rising from the table.

"Dere vos twelve, Captain, mit me."

"That will do," I said. "In half an hour from now have the men ready for the road," and I turned and left the room.

We must depart at once. More than ever now I realized the necessity for haste. I hoped to meet the officer commanding the Federal detachment who had come to our aid, pay him the customary marks of respect, and get away without again coming in contact with Major Brennan. I felt myself pledged to this course of action.

A sentry stationed in the lower hallway informed me the officers were meeting together in the front parlor, and I at once headed that way. I paused, however, to visit the wounded for a moment, spoke cheerily to my own men, and then, opening the door quietly, entered the room which I had last left in possession of the guerrillas. With the exception of broken windows and bullet-scarred walls little evidence remained of that contest which had raged here with such fury but a few hours previously. There were numerous dark stains upon the carpet, but much of the furniture had been restored to place, while a cheerful wood fire crackled in the open grate. Before it three men were sitting smoking, while upon a small table close at their elbows rested a flat bottle, flanked by several glasses. A single glance sufficed to tell me they were Federal cavalrymen, one being the red-faced lieutenant whom I had already met.

"I am seeking the commander of this detachment," I explained, as they glanced at me in surprise at my entrance unannounced. "I am Captain Wayne, in charge of the Confederate troop which was engaged in defense of this house."

A portly man with a strong face, and wearing a closely clipped gray beard, arose from a comfortable armchair and advanced with hand extended.

"I am Captain Moorehouse, in command," he answered, cordially, "and am very glad to meet you. Will you not join us? My second lieutenant, who has positive genius in that line, has unearthed a few bottles of rather choice whisky which we will divide most gladly."

"I thank you," I replied, anxious to meet him as pleasantly as possible, "but I am eager to get away upon my duty as early as may be, and have merely intruded upon you to explain my purpose."

"Nonsense," he insisted. "Duty is never quite so urgent as to require a waste of good liquor. Captain Wayne, permit me to present my officers—Lieutenants Warren and Starr, Second New Hampshire Cavalry."

The constant haunting fear of the Major's possible entrance at any moment rendered me extremely uneasy, and anxious to be away. Undoubtedly this feeling exhibited itself in my manner, for Captain Moorehouse said finally:

"I realize your natural anxiety to be off, Captain Wayne, and while we should be very glad to keep you with us indefinitely, yet I trust you will feel perfectly free in the matter."

"I thank you greatly," I answered, rising as I spoke. "My duty is of such

importance that I cannot afford to be detained here. I am glad to have the opportunity of speaking a word in praise of the wonderful consumption cure, "SAMBER" and I would be glad to see it published in some of the leading news papers that other poor unfortunate victims of lung trouble may by reading be convinced of its great healing power and begin using it before it is too late. Several years ago my wife had a very bad lung trouble and chronic cough, she was treated by the best physicians, and used various other remedies without even temporary relief, after being advised to try "SAMBER" she used a few bottles of it and received a permanent cure. I know "SAMBER" saved her life.

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"I Brand You Here and Now as Sneak and Liar; Now Will You Fight?"

a nature, and has already been so long neglected that I feel every moment of unnecessary delay to be a crime. I wish you a pleasant return within your own lines, and an early cessation of hostilities.

I had shaken hands with them all, and turned toward the door, congratulating myself on escaping thus easily, when a new voice broke suddenly in upon my self-satisfaction:

"I trust Captain Wayne is not intending to depart without at least a word with me?"

It was Brennan. He had entered unobserved from the second parlor.

"Frankly," I responded, "I hoped I might."

"Have you forgotten, then, our compact, or do you simply elect to ignore it?"

HOW THE SCHOOL RALLY WILL HELP

Awakens New Enthusiasm the Children's Condition.

IT MAKES THEM ALL THINK

As an Old Farmer Said, "I Believe This Is the Most Important Lot of Young Stock That's Ever Been Exhibited." Did the Investment Pay?

A little over a year ago a man who saw possibilities in the pleasure and enthusiasm of child life decided to invest some money. He had seen much of the world, but determined to try his experiment in his old boyhood home county of Bullitt. He offered the county school officials the dividends from a thousand dollar L. and N. bond, to be used as they saw fit. These officials decided upon an all day rally



A SADDLE HORSE ENTRY.

and picnic, with many and varied contests, so that every child in the county might compete.

During the most perfect October weather Shepherdsville had her first school rally. Early that morning the children began to pour into town by rail, in buggies and surreys, in big farm wagons and on wide spread hay frames, on horseback and muleback, and their friends and relatives came too. By 10 o'clock, the time set for the parade, the town was alive with boys and girls. The staid farmers that braced the courthouse fence were long badges hanging from the lapels of their coats, badges that read "TRUSTEES" or "FRIEND OF THE SCHOOLS." No one seemed inclined to talk about crops or politics.

With a full brass band from Louisville heading the column, 700 youngsters marched, danced and pranced through the old town. It was a parade of exquisite beauty because of the that beamed and sparkled in the faces; it was a parade of grave importance because of the future citizens that was there. The long line was broken here and there by a gayly bedecked wagon overflowing with smiling, giggling, rosy faced girls and boys.

The contests at the fair grounds were begun as soon as the parade disbanded. These contests were divided into eight sections, so that children of about the same age might enter. There were spelling matches, arithmetic matches, story telling matches, in progress almost continuously. There were potato races, foot races, three legged races, horse races, hitching up races, races for each and every one. Now and then the program would be interrupted by a marching column with its cheer leader. The column would yell itself hoarse and retire amid the applause of the



ONE OF THE FLOATS.

grand stand. Over in the floral hall was a splendid display of needlework, good things to eat and handwork of all kinds. All of this fun and enthusiasm in the glad mellow sunshine of a perfect autumn day!

Was the investment a good one? This might be answered by a farmer's answer to the question, "Well, what do you think of it?"

The old man's face wrinkled into a smile that began in the corners of his eyes and gradually spread to his big mouth before he said quietly:

"I have been lookin' at fine stock in these fair grounds for years, an' I've thought a lot about feedin' an' han'lin' stock, but"—he hesitated a moment, waved his hand out toward a big group of children intent upon some contest and continued—"I believe this here is the most important lot of young stock that's ever been exhibited, an' I'm goin' to think more about han'lin' 'em after this."